

dialogue

The Staff Newsletter of the Ministry of Community and Social Services

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Restructuring design work near completion

The end of the month is fast approaching and the ministry's Restructuring Project Team and its four task forces are aiming at June 30th to complete the new design of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. A major announcement from Deputy Minister Rosemary Proctor is expected to follow on July 5th.

"The task forces and project team members have been working very hard to pull everything together to meet our deadlines," says Christine Macartney, director of the Restructuring Project.

Management Committee has been

Hepburn Block, 7th floor) at 325-5820. But hurry — June 30th is coming up quickly.

Corporate Services Task Force

The Corporate Services Task Force (chair: Lynn MacDonald, Assistant Deputy Minister of Corporate Services) is responsible for defining how information systems, human resources, financial and administrative services can be delivered to achieve consistency, efficiency and accountability.

Their work has been guided by recent decisions made at Management Committee. Some of these are:

- Corporate Services Division will provide a full-function service to other divisions, except for estimates planning and support of local information systems.
- Field staff carrying out corporate services-related functions will continue to report to area and facility line managers. Their work will be subject to corporate policies, standards, and guidelines as well as dual sign-offs and accreditation where appropriate.
- Corporate Services Division will be responsible for the provision of

The task force has been working on clarifying the process for the placement of staff in the newly-restructured organization, as well as the process for the redeployment of surplus staff.

A number of supporting documents are being prepared that will focus on improving performance management practices, innovative compensation strategies and clear accountability for human resource services throughout the organization.



ADM of Strategic Directions Judith Wright and Cheryl O'Connor from the Southeast Regional Office at a meeting of the Policy Task Force.

Operations Task Force

The Operations Task Force (chair: Margaret Gallow, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister of Operations) is at work on a design for the division now known as Operations Division.

The division's decision and support structures and processes are being re-designed. These changes are expected to facilitate the reporting relationship of the 13 area managers to the ADM; to focus the division on its program management mandate; strengthen its relationships with corporate services and policy staff; and improve efficiencies through streamlining and delaying.

This design is progressing on the basis that the regional offices will be closed by next March, and that a new branch will be created to support the ministry's work for people with developmental disabilities (possibly it will be called the Developmental Services Branch).

John Hewitt, administrator of Oxford Regional Centre, has been leading work on this new branch. This group has been progressing on its design for a branch that will carry out policy development and program design and implementation planning and program support. This should lead to more fully integrated community and policy program management functions.

Policy Task Force

The Policy Task Force (chair: Judith Wright, Assistant Deputy Minister of Strategic

Directions) is completing definitions of the various kinds of policy work undertaken by the ministry.

The task force has recommended that policies must become "implementable." That is, as policy is developed it must include everything from concept through to practical application. Manuals, guidelines, and standards will come with policies so that they can be put into place in a practical way.

This approach will also promote the mutual responsibilities and interests of policy and operations to create and execute implementable policy.



Doug Hoyman of Thunder Bay Area Office makes a point during task force meeting.



Alison Fraser, David Vice and Jim Stewart listen intently at a task force meeting.

considering material which has been coming forward from the task forces on a weekly basis so they can view the material as a whole and make decisions on an integrated basis.

The project team will pull together all the pieces of the design work from the four task forces, identifying potential gaps or inconsistencies and integrating the work into one comprehensive design.

To get an idea of the criteria the task forces are using in their design work, read "The restructuring's design standards" on page 2.

Following is a summary of the progress the task forces have made so far.

To make suggestions to the project team about the restructuring, or express concerns or pose questions, you can contact the team through the e-mail account RESTRUC_PROJ; leave a message on voice-mail at 416-325-5320; or speak to a team member (they're at

management/workplace issues training, e.g. employment equity, workplace harassment, and for overall training; it will also be responsible for managing the provision of training in information systems, finance, administration and human resources. Operations Division will in turn be responsible for program-related training.

Human Resources Task Force

The Human Resources Task Force (chair: Mary Kardos Burton, Director of Human Resources Branch) has developed two tools to assist all the task forces in identifying the positions that will be needed in our new organization. These tools are the Inventory of Functional and Generic Skills, and the Generic Position Outline.

A view from the regional offices

by Marvin Ross

Shock, anger, denial, resentment and acceptance — these are all common reactions to news that your workplace is closing. All of these emotions are being felt in the ministry, particularly in the four regional offices that are slated to be closed by March 31 next year.

Many people are working through a number of reactions — "from denial to

anxiety and then the realization that this closure won't go away," as one support staff person in one of the regional offices put it.

Some people have managed to turn the circumstances into a positive. Eva Vonk, the co-ordinator of strategic management in Central, says, "I see it (the closure) as an opportunity to move on, have a change, and perhaps find a better situation."

Rumours about impending closures and changes had been rampant for quite some time but as rumours are normally prevalent in an organization, most people discounted them. As a result, the announcement did come as a shock to many people.

Kathleen Schnart, the co-ordinator of systems and support services in Kingston, says the consensus in her office is that the

time lag between the announcement (mid-March) and the date for completion of the task force reports (June 30th) has kept everyone on edge.

People have been anxious about receiving information about rights and

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Rosemary Proctor: A profile

Story and photos by Julia Naczynski



On a visit to the Toronto Area Office, Rosemary Proctor met program supervisor Linda Betsworth and acting children's and youth services manager Merlyn Green...

Since becoming deputy minister in February, Rosemary Proctor has had her hands full.

Rosemary has rejoined MCSS at what must certainly be one of the most difficult and challenging times in the history of government. Her job includes juggling financial constraints, the consequences of a difficult economy, a re-organization of the ministry and major reforms in the area of social assistance and child care.

"The financial constraints force us to deal with difficult

decisions that need to be made, but they also provide us with an opportunity to deal with problems that have existed for some time now," comments Rosemary.

"In the past, we've had the luxury of being able to create a lot of really dynamic, interesting services and respond to very specific needs. But we know that when we do that, over

time we get a lot of fragmentation.

"The limited financial resources we are now faced with means we need to find ways to use our resources more effectively," says Rosemary.

Rosemary came to us directly from nearly three years at Cabinet Office, which she feels has given her a better corporate sense of the government's priorities and the importance of the "interministerial connection and working together."

"There's no such thing as a single-ministry issue any more," she says. "We are evolving to a different economy and a different way of doing business. We have some really critical priorities to work on."

With social assistance reform, "we have to get thinking about it in different ways — have it seen as a transition, as a bridge to employment," says Rosemary. She acknowledges that with the current economic climate, jobs are scarce, but we have to look further ahead. "It's really important for people to get training and be prepared for new jobs when they do become available."

"And child care reform needs



...and special agreements officer Karen Lane, among others.

the policy process and contribute to that." Streamlining and improving accountability in decision-making are also being emphasized in the re-organization, says Rosemary.

"It's a time of very rapid and often very scary change," she observes. Although it's an unsettling process, "it's important that people contribute to that process and get on with their

responsibilities as effectively as they possibly can."

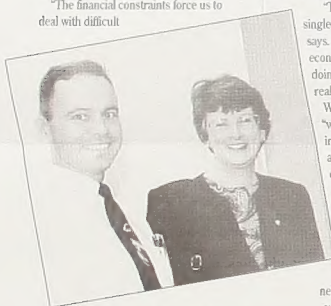
Rosemary notes that as things change — such as the closure of the four regional offices by the end of March 1994 — the ministry will be looking for the maximum possible opportunities for redeployment within MCSS. Where that's not possible, people will be helped to find positions in other ministries.

"These are really unsettling times, not only for people in the broader public sector but in the OPS and in each ministry. We are all building a culture of greater openness in our business as well as flexibility in our organization," says Rosemary. "But I certainly think the staff of MCSS are up to the challenge."

to be seen as being a very critical aspect of women being able to work and to take up new jobs when they appear in the economy."

Also critical to our agenda is working with the community on "the whole range of support services that folks need so badly when times are tough as well as in better times." This includes children's services and supports to families and to people with developmental disabilities.

One task in the coming ministry re-organization is to bring policy and operations closer together "so that when policy is being developed it's being done in a way that enables operations people — the field — to work with it." Conversely, "operations needs to have good input into



...manager of finance Andre Lafontaine...

Rosemary Proctor: A 60-second résumé

- Has Bachelor of Arts degree from American University, Washington, D.C. (international relations, economics) and Master's degree in Social Work from University of Manitoba.
- Worked at the Manitoba government during the early 1970s, then in social services in that province.
- In the late 1970s, was executive director of a health and social services

co-operative in Winnipeg.

- Spent the early 1980s with us at MCSS (a senior policy analyst with Policy Development at MCSS from 1980 to 1985, then manager of the Corporate Planning Unit until late 1980), then returned to Manitoba's Department of Community Services.
- Came back to Ontario in 1988 to work on the long-term care task force.

The restructuring's design standards

The ministry's re-organization is being based on design standards in six key areas:

Client service is at the top of the list because the aim of the ministry is to service clients in need of social services. These standards are being designed to include (among other factors): consistent and timely support to the field structure; operating authority placed as close to the point of client contact as possible; and consistent and timely response and input to head office from the field structure.

Flexibility standards are being designed to position the ministry as an organization able to adapt to change as needed.

Effectiveness standards will include: minimizing functions and management layers; and use of information systems and technology to streamline the organization.

Accountability and authority clarification standards are being included because there is a lack of clarity in these areas, leading to indecisiveness,

inconsistency and waste of resources. The design in this area will empower individuals with authority to match their assigned accountabilities, and decisions will be made by accountable individuals, not by teams, task forces or committees.

Participation, communication and team work standards will include: the use of multi-disciplinary and multi-skilled teams to carry out time-limited projects; encouragement of open communication across the organization; and support for individuals to act with creativity and judgment.

Efficiency within resources is part of the implementation of the new organization and will result in streamlining and downsizing. The Expenditure Control Plan will be the guide.

...regional offices

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benefits. Notes Eva Vonk: "A lack of information regarding the job situation, rights, benefits and so on has been difficult for many staff." One Southwest support person did say that she was appreciative of the efforts of the London human resources staff.

Redeployment responsibilities have been assigned to the human resources managers in the regional offices and a redeployment co-ordinator for the ministry has been established (see end of this story for names and telephone numbers).

In addition, Deputy Minister Rosemary Proctor and Human Resources Director Mary Kardos Burton have visited three of the four regional offices personally to answer employees' questions (a visit to the fourth office is scheduled). About 130 full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff are in the regional offices.

Staff at head office, some of whom are also being affected by the restructuring, have similar feelings even though they recognize that a reorganization of the ministry is necessary. A policy analyst with

the Community Services Branch observes that ministry management was probably trying to be humane in letting people know that they might become surplus, but says living with the uncertainty about the changes is difficult.

One planning officer who has decided to accept the Factor 80 retirement option commented that "I have worked very hard for the ministry over the years but it is a sad way to end a career when your office must close."

If you are in a regional office and have a question about the closures, contact your regional human resources manager. In Central Regional Office, this is Phil Branton (416-325-9731) or Pat Cowling (325-9791); in Southwest, Dick Clarke (519-538-8344); in Southeast, John Upper (613-548-6761); North, Bob Nye (705-949-8052). Or contact the ministry redeployment co-ordinator, Darlene Yewer, at (416) 327-4809.

Martin Ross is an MCSS employee who has authored several books and is a frequent freelance contributor to publications such as *The Globe and Mail*. Like some of the people he interviewed, he works at Central Regional Office.

Doing business in better ways

by Julia Naczynski

Even though our focus is on social services, this ministry is like a business — we pay bills, write cheques, keep track of expenses, do bookkeeping, manage staff and technology, and generally

services. "Better business practice means looking at the way we do business and developing ways to do things in a more streamlined and effective fashion."

Many ministry staff already do things in

greater consistency across the ministry in how we do business," explains Mary. So her first few months on the job have involved travelling to our field offices to meet with a cross-section of staff to find out the various ways — in particular, the innovative ways — that they're doing business.

What IS a "better business practice"?

- It's an procedure which results more effective, simpler, less bureaucratic way of doing things;
- It's an improvement or change which results in financial, resources and/or time savings;
- It's when you make fuller use of existing technology;
- It's a practice that crosses division or program lines, and helps provide a more consistent approach.

If your office has found new ways of doing business that work well for you, or if you're looking for new approaches, Mary Simpson would like to hear from you. You can reach her at SIMPSON_M (node HCSD) on e-mail, or at 2 Bloor Street West, 30th floor, Toronto (416-327-4567). Or, send your idea to the unit's "suggestion box" on DEC at BBP_Unit@HCSDIA.

The unit's telephone number is 327-4569, where you can reach Valerie O'Hara, Leslie Girdharry and Alice Rendek, the other staff of the unit.

Generic budget package reduces duplication

The Toronto Area Office's Services to Disabled Persons Unit has been developing an automated generic budget package that can be used by just about any organization when seeking funding.

Many community agencies receive funds from sources other than the ministry, such as the United Way, other government bodies and charitable foundations. Often, the agency must provide information that is specifically tailored to the funding body, even though the funding bodies are essentially asking for the same core of information, says Val O'Hara, the program supervisor who led this project (she's now with the Better Business Practices Unit).

With a generic form, "they could produce the information once instead of several times over," she says, and then customize it for other purposes.

The generic form has been tested in Val's (former) unit this year and appears to be working well, she says.

More than 50 agencies have been involved in the pilot.

Val has been meeting with staff from the municipality and the United Way for the past year. They are working toward sharing this common budget form in the future.

"We're trying to be more efficient in the way we do business with our agencies by not just looking at our own needs, but by also putting ourselves in their shoes," says Val.

For more information, contact Jack Ray (416-325-0629) or Pam Musson (325-0629) at the unit.

The Better Business Practices Unit meets — Leslie Girdharry, Valerie O'Hara, Mary Simpson and Alice Rendek.

look after a lot of money.

These are all business practices — and Mary Simpson knows there are lots of ways we can do business better.

Mary is the manager of the Better Business Practices Unit, established last December to look for ways we can consistently conduct our business to be more effective, efficient and economical.

This hasn't got anything to do with reworking the social services we deliver, cautions Mary, with 19 years with the ministry includes working as an adult protective service worker, community accommodation officer, program supervisor, policy analyst and in financial

innovative ways, and part of the unit's job is to encourage, promote and share these innovative procedures with others so they can incorporate them into their own practices. The unit is also responsible for providing project leadership on specific better business practice initiatives.

Mary and the unit's other staff of three want to make better business practice "one of the things we always think about as we're designing new ways of conducting business," she says. This can be as simple as the wording and appearance of a new form, or as complex as better use of computer information systems.

"Part of better business practice is to get

Getting and staying in touch the e-mail way

the lead role for a cost containment initiative in the Income Maintenance Unit at Kingston Area Office.

The task was to review program delivery for both GWA and FBA programs. "The intent was to save program dollars and streamline processes in areas of consistency and accountability, and to identify support and training needs," explains Lynn.

As her unit prepared the Kingston area cost containment workplan, it was broadcast via DEC/WordPerfect to other offices, with an invitation to comment and to participate in sharing information, results and issues with other program review officers. This was well received.

In addition, the Kingston Area Office was the first office to send out a "discussion paper" tabling a variety of topics. Other area offices shared theirs, too.

"E-mail seemed a logical, practical step to reach other PROs who have been in the field many years," says Lynn. "It makes use of expertise, and provides training, development and ongoing support to new staff."

"It's like a network."

Currently Kingston is linked to the 13 area offices, and there's a network of 45 PROs.

Kingston PROs Lynn Park and Bill Waugh get in touch the e-mail way with their colleagues.

E-mail has added a new dimension to communication within the ministry. It's an easy way of getting in touch with colleagues to exchange information and share ideas.

Lynn Park, a program review officer (PRO), found she was able to use the DEC system as a conferencing and communication tool when she was given

Technology to work at home

Nearly a quarter of the 170 staff at the Kingston Area Office are able to work from home, thanks to technology that enables them to link their homes to the ministry's VAX computer system.

The area office installed software called Zstem and KEAterm that can link home computers to the ministry's system, as long as there is a modem on the home computer. About 25 staff can work at home in this way. This enables them to work after office hours in the comfort of their homes, or (for example) during illnesses that aren't debilitating but prevent the employee from coming into the office, such as colds.

Of course, this helps staff to keep up with their workloads and to meet deadlines.

In addition, there are 15 portables that staff can borrow to work at home. There are also modems in the Brockville and Belleville offices.

Kingston's technology manager is Tom Burns. Systems officers Jay Kingston and Christine Purvis do the software

Christine Purvis, Tom Burns and Jay Kingston at Kingston Area Office try out a take-home laptop computer

installations and support that have made the work-at-home link-up a reality. For more information, contact them at Kingston Area Office (613-545-4525 or 4374).

A poet is published

Bev Patch, who is with the Ottawa Area Office's Finance Unit, recently won the Editor's Choice Award for Outstanding Achievement in Poetry from the National Library of Poetry in Maryland.

Bev's poem, a nostalgic look backwards entitled *Youth*, now goes on file in the Library of Congress and is entered in the National Library of Poetry's North American Open Poetry Contest.

"I saw it as an opportunity to share my work," says Bev, who will see *Youth* published in the book *Where Dreams Begin*.

"Of all the treasures gained and lost in life/There's one universal truth/The most fleeting of all life's pleasures/Is our brief but wondrous Youth," begins the poem.

Bev has been with MCSS for 15 years and has been writing for several years.

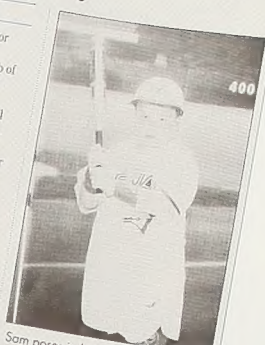


Blue Jays Kids Day

Story and photo by Irv Kirslein

April 10th was a memorable day for approximately 5,000 visitors to Toronto's SkyDome. The Variety Club of Ontario, the Blue Jays and MCSS staff teamed up to select, transport and accompany children and escorts from all over Ontario to that day's baseball game. For some it was their first trip to live professional baseball game. Sam, an eight-year-old from London, was enthralled. He even got his own playing card — a picture of himself on one side and his statistics on the other side — just like Roberto Alomar, his favourite player.

The Jays made sure the game itself was one the crowd would appreciate. The World Series champions won the game against the Cleveland Indians 5-4. This is the 11th year for Kids Day.



Sam poses in baseball memorabilia from Blue Jays Kids Day 1993.

Career Centre opens

To help meet the challenges of today's environment, the MCSS Library, part of the Human Resources Branch, has established a Career Centre in Toronto on the 4th floor of 880 Bay St., Room 415. The Centre opened on June 15, and you can access it via e-mail (type in "CAREER" as the addressee's name) or call the co-ordinator, Elizabeth Sharp, at (416) 326-6448.

The centre is open to all MCSS employees who are interested in obtaining information on any aspect of career planning or job search techniques. The

Career Centre has been designed so you can "walk" yourself through each stage of the job search/career planning process.

There are books, videos and articles on display for you to use. Self-paced workbooks and computer software will be set up to assist you with everything from assessing your interests and skills to resume writing and planning your career. Material may be borrowed, but you are strongly encouraged to visit personally as some tools (such as software) is best used "hands-on" to get the maximum benefit.

Our Audit is tops

The MCSS Comprehensive Audit and Review Branch team was more than pleasantly surprised to learn recently that they received top marks from a recent independent quality-assurance review.

The branch was one of only three government branches to receive a "fully complies" rating. It also received a "perfect" rating in the client satisfaction category. The evaluation score was the highest encountered by the team leader spanning both the public and private sectors.

The consultant from the International

Institute of Internal Auditors, whose team conducted the review, said that "if a single internal audit branch were to be selected as a model of 'best practices'...it should be this branch."

There are 35 staff members in the branch, led by director Ron Bakker. ADM of Corporate Services Lynn MacDonald visited the branch to congratulate the team for their achievement, and the branch has been nominated for an Amethyst Award for excellence in professional achievement in the Ontario Public Service.

Area office trains in equity

Employment equity training is taking place all over the province, and the London Area Office had a training session in March.

Area manager Frank Capitano set the three days of training into motion at the opening day. Frank emphasized that employment equity has become an important and integral aspect of our working environment and that the London Area Office fully supports the ministry in "its commitment to the principles and spirit of employment equity."

Ather Shabbir, a trainer from the Employment Equity Office, conducted the sessions. Topics included Employment Equity: More Than A Passing Trend, and Discrimination and Stereotyping.

Ather used a balanced combination of brief lecture style with videos, group

discussion, role playing and case studies that encouraged much open, honest discussion and participation. The video *A Class Divided* was well-received for its portrayal of the destructive impact that discrimination can have on a group.

Staff left these training sessions more aware that changes can only come about through education, communication and interaction with other people and cultures. The determination of all staff to make change is reflected in the energetic planning and involvement by all staff for on-going training sessions over the next three years.

Bill Beauchamp and Arden Irvine
London Area Office

Recent retirees and honourees



North Central Area manager Richard Rivard (left) presented income maintenance caseworker Bill Luddy of Elliot Lake with his Quarter Century Club plaque for 25 years of service.

Fred Purificati retired after 31 years of service in February. He was the Peterborough Area Office manager.

Anne Warren retired after more than 37 years of service. She was manager of the ministry's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FIPPA) Unit.

Editor's note: Please let us know of retirees and honourees, and we will mention them in Dialogue. Because of space limitations, photos must be clear and of high quality to be published.

Better service step by step: Help to help you do better

Need to improve the quality of service in your workplace? Not sure how? Improving Service Quality in the Ontario Government is just the book for you.

It's a how-to workbook with practical exercises that goes through a step-by-step process of making improvements to service.

For a free copy, fax (do not phone) your order to 416-326-5317, or write to Publications Ontario, 50 Grosvenor St., Toronto, Ont. M7A 1N8 (include your internal government return address).

dialogue

Ontario Community and Social Services

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